

of their colleagues when they introduced the House version of this bill, H.R. 664. They have now over 120 co-sponsors.

Several organizations endorsed our legislation, some of which include the National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare, TREA Senior Citizens League, Consumer Federation of America, and Families USA Foundation. Many South Dakota groups have also endorsed our bill, including the South Dakota Coalition of Citizens with Disabilities and the North Central Chapter of the Paralyzed Veterans of America. We now have well over 30 organizations actively supporting this legislation.

Currently, there are several prescription drug proposals in Congress. We ought to have hearings on this issue, and we ought to go forward as aggressively as we can.

Madam President, there is no need to wait. We can act on this now. We can give seniors now the benefit of this 40 percent reduction in prescription drug costs that they deserve and need.

What an irony it is that so many of our seniors wind up not taking their prescription drugs in order to save money and then fall ill with an acute illness and wind up in the emergency room, and then Medicare picks up the tab. Wouldn't it be better if we can find a way to make sure seniors can afford the prescription in the first place to avoid that kind of acute illness, that emergency room visit? The taxpayers will gain, the dignity of the seniors will gain, their physical health will gain. All Americans would be better off with the immediate passage in this Congress of the Prescription Drug Fairness for Seniors Act of 1999.

I yield back such time as may remain.

Mr. BYRD addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia is recognized.

Mr. BYRD. What is the situation regarding time?

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, morning business is closed.

The Senate will now resume consideration of Senate Resolution 186 and Senate Resolution 187, which the clerk will report.

Mr. BYRD. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that I may proceed as in morning business for not to exceed 10 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

BUDGET CAPS AND EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. BYRD. Madam President, shortly we will be debating two resolutions re-

garding education funding. Though there are differences in the approaches taken in the resolutions, the bottom line is similar—namely, this Senate and this Congress need to support education, and we need to find sufficient funding to meet our obligations to America's students. We need to support our struggling schools as they attempt to provide safe, disciplined environments in which our youth can learn both the fundamentals of history, literature, mathematics, and science, as well as the emerging fields of the next century—computers, satellite communications, advanced electronics and other information technologies that are reshaping the American workplace.

On this bottom line, we all agree. The difficult part in this difficult appropriations cycle is, how do we get there? Our funding levels are too low to meet the administration's request, too low to meet the needs that we can all see and agree need to be met, but we are constrained by a budgetary straightjacket imposed in 1997. All year, I have advocated breaking the budgetary caps in order to meet our most pressing needs, but until that happens, the Appropriations Committee must play the cards it has been dealt. This evening, the Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, will meet to mark up an appropriations bill that contains funding for education, among other things. When all is said and done, Madam President, I am very proud of the work of our Committee on Appropriations this year. I have served with many great Senators and I have served with a number of great chairmen of the Committee on Appropriations. None has handled their responsibilities any better than has our current Appropriations Committee Chairman, Senator STEVENS of Alaska. He has worked closely with me throughout his tenure as chairman of the committee in as nonpartisan a manner as anyone I have ever worked with. We have handled these very difficult matters as best we could to the benefit of all Senators and for the American people. In so doing, despite these crushing spending caps, we have been able to pass in the Senate most of the appropriations bills. The final bill, namely the Labor-HHS appropriations for FY 2000, will be marked up in subcommittee this evening and, in all likelihood, in the full Appropriations Committee tomorrow.

Madam President, frankly, I see no intellectually honest way to adequately provide for education without breaking the budgetary caps.

I know neither side wants to suggest that the caps be broken. Each side wants the other side to be the first. I have no hesitancy to say how I feel because I am interested in education. I am interested in meeting the needs of the country and meeting the needs of

the people. If it cannot be done without breaking the caps, then so be it.

I cannot support these two resolutions, not because I disagree with their intent, but because I cannot voice my support for increasing education funding on the one hand while in the same breath saying that the budget caps cannot be broken. Education is important. If it is important, it is worth breaking the budget caps. And it is. It is worth breaking the budget caps. Budgetary gimmicks that add months to the fiscal year or that take funds from other critical programs like heating assistance for the poor and the elderly will not hold up over time. They are very frail reeds, very weak reeds, to which to cling in the face of hurricane force winds of need.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

EXPRESSING THE SENSE OF THE SENATE REGARDING REAUTHORIZING THE ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION ACT OF 1965

TO EXPRESS THE SENSE OF THE SENATE REGARDING EDUCATION FUNDING

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will now resume consideration of S. Res. 186 and S. Res. 187, which the clerk will report.

The legislative assistant read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 186) expressing the sense of the Senate regarding reauthorizing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965.

A resolution (S. Res. 187) to express the sense of the Senate regarding education funding.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There will now be a total of 2 hours debate on the two resolutions under the control of the two leaders.

Mr. BYRD. Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum and ask unanimous consent that the time be charged against each side.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative assistant proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. HUTCHINSON. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Arkansas is recognized.

Mr. HUTCHINSON. Madam President, as I rode to the office this afternoon, I was listening to news accounts which were reporting that the President was making a series of speeches in which he was criticizing the congressional majority and their plans for education and education improvement in this country.